

Dianne: Share the screen, which is the topic of volunteer supervision. Now, a lot of the segments in this module. 12 modules for the university of Waterloo Renison university college, Volunteer management in the not-for-profit sector. These three modules that this group has prepared, and we'll discuss over our three discussion groups, um, all overlap. There's not one of us that doesn't know about all of these topics. We have to know about all of it. In the end, um, module is about, you know, how we train ourselves as professionals to work in this industry. So, this is a great starting point. This is module six, halfway through the 12, that Sherry did, uh, Sherry Erb from the Kitchener public library who put together the slides that the students will have seen. And this group of professionals are joining us for a conversation to try and nail in a little bit more on the topic that Sherry has provided with the slides. So, if we could go to Sherry first, perhaps Sherry you wouldn't mind giving us a little bit of a review of what you prepared and had so much fun doing after 30 years of working in the industry. You are a guru in our, in our midst. So, she doesn't like the word. We're friends, aren't we? We're all friends in this room.

Sherry: So, my name is Sherry Erb. I am the volunteer manager at Kitchener public library, and I've been in this role for over 25 years. Um, what I love about my position is, is the privilege of meeting people who want to support the library and want to get involved in their community and help those who need support. And that I'm sure it's true for all of the organizations that are represented here on this panel. What I did is I focused on supervision and what we looked at is we looked at developing effective volunteer training, the importance of monitoring volunteers and supporting volunteers in providing feedback. I also looked at evaluating volunteer performance. And with that, I know that it sometimes seems counter-intuitive to evaluate volunteers who are donating their time, but I looked at the short-term volunteer versus the long-term volunteer. And I also looked at the risk and skill level that our volunteers are bringing to our organization and that if they're coming for one day or if they're doing a fairly simple task, the supervision and the, um, evaluation piece would be maybe smaller versus someone who's on your board or someone who's taking books to someone who can't come to the library themselves. And then finally I looked at recognition and there's a lot of components to recognition. Recognition of volunteers is a very fun topic. There's formal informal. There is providing meaningful appreciation to, to the volunteer and also making sure it's part of your, uh, organizational plan for volunteer engagement. I guess, to start, it might be good to hear about or discuss training and to me, there's in person training and there's virtual training, but there's also on the job training, mentorship, and more formal training and handbooks. So, I'm wondering if anybody could just share what they feel is really effective training in their organization.

Heidi: I can talk about training. Maybe I'll just talk specifically about virtual training. Since most of us were kind of forced into that at the start of the pandemic. I might've been a dream of ours previously to convert our trainings to virtual, but never did that because we didn't have the time or the resources or the push. Um, but then we had the push and had to do it. Uh, as I mentioned in the last module, we had a hundred volunteers who applied for meals on wheels within two weeks at the start of the pandemic to help with us. And there is simply no way that we are going to have them in for training like we used to where we'd have, you know, a

volunteer, take them in their car and give them sort of a ride along shadow shift. Uh, so we couldn't do that. So, we had to develop PowerPoint presentations with voiceover, um, and kind of go through everything that they would need to know to deliver meals on wheels. Um, so we've revised that, uh, training a couple of times over since they started the pandemic as protocols have changed. But it's been really successful and it has saved a lot of staff time, even though it was a lot of work upfront to put those together. Um, it saved a lot of staff times cause we weren't repeating the same information. Um, Or with all the different volunteers. Yeah. We decided as well to do quizzes at the end. So, making sure that they had that knowledge. Um, and then as well, um, we also had a staff member that was available for that person on their first shift, just to say, hi, give them their name tag. And just to make sure that they knew exactly what they needed to do, um, for their first shift, so they could be successful. So, um, yes, the pandemic has definitely made it so that we, you know, everything is, everything is virtual for us now. Um, yeah. So, it's been a good thing for sure.

Dianne: I know Ruth, um, from historically being a volunteer, volunteer manager. I think you were the front runner to the online training. When I heard what she did for Scouts, Canada, I was like, wow. Did you want to speak to that?

Ruth: Sure. Um, so yes, when I was actually volunteering, uh, with Scouts, we actually way before pandemic, um, I had to figure out a way, how do you train volunteers across volunteer leaders across Canada? And that's where virtual training really came, online training really came, um, e-learning really came to that organization. And I think that, um, for many of us the pandemic has put us in that opportunity. When I look at work, uh, for CNIB I run a regional team. So not very often can I get all of them together in a room anyhow, but I now can get them together in a virtual room. And I think that's the, the nice piece about that, where it didn't really change much during pandemic for us because of the fact that, uh, we were still running virtual training anyhow, and so became very regular. And, um, I think I'm doing the onboarding and the orientation piece of it, but then I'm also doing another component, which has just probably been in the last maybe six months or so, where I've gone to the volunteers and say, what do you need to be able to run virtual programming? They've told me where their gaps, their skills are missing, and then I'm coming and trying to figure out what kind of training they need. So, every month they're getting an additional training that they can take part in. I mean, that's a really good recognition piece as well as is the training component. So, I think there's a huge opportunity to look at training very differently and also to look at it, not only as a volunteer's coming into the organization, but all the way along through their development.

Dianne: New skills. We're having to learn as employees these days. Right? And we will spend more time on virtual volunteering and practices then, is there anything else that people would like to share on that or something else along the lines of recognition? Did you want to move along on some other topics, Sherry or?

Sherry: Yes. Um, I think that it's very easy to talk about informal versus formal. And I'm just wondering if, um, if that is changed at all for people, and if there's certain things that have been really successful, as far as formal recognition?

Dianne: In the current environment?

Sherry: Well both like, for example, uh, we'd always have a party once a year, and I know that, um, people talk about making sure it's meaningful, but for my approach as an organization, as we ensure that we have our formal training in place, but then we fill it with informal training throughout the year. So, instead of a party. Recently, I sent out a gift cards, e-cards to everybody, to a favorite ice cream shop, a local business in town. And it was very well received and we recognize people who donated any time during the last year and a half during COVID, because we know that it was a really stressful time. And so much change for people, but we wanted to say, you know, thanks for at least, uh, giving us some of your time and skills during that time. So, it was a recognition that was probably informal in that it was a very, you know, quietly distributed via email. But to me, it was, uh, I was really proud of the fact that we were able to recognize volunteers who donated during that period of time. Um, so that was a really positive experience for us.

Dianne: Jen, you had your eyes light up on that topic.

Jen: My eyes light up. I unmuted. If that's what you meant.

Dianne: Yeah, sure.

Jen: We, we do both, right. We do a combination of formal and informal. Um, our formal, um, party type thing that you mentioned is successful. We have well over 200 that come every, um, once a year when we have our annual volunteer event, obviously we haven't had in the past few years, but it will be coming back and we are looking forward to that. Um, and that's just a way that we, you know, we have a dinner and we recognize our longstanding volunteers and it's just a time for the volunteers to come together. Um, socialize, enjoy each other's company and, um, usually something inspiring or story or something like that. Um, informal though is really, I think the most, um, is really a meaningful thing though. Saying thank you anytime you can. Um, thank you cards that we send out. Um, something that I do that gets almost an email response every day is I send everyone a, a birthday email message. So everyone gets a message on their birthday. And usually a great response because they're often surprised that I know their birthday. Um, so that's just one way that we, we recognize people. Um, again, what Ruth was going on was what Ruth was talking about was training and recognition going hand in hand, and we do offer the same thing. So we would offer, um, you know, nonviolent crisis intervention, first aid training, um, safe food handling training. For some people getting these skills and having these courses on their resume is a very meaningful thing that we're able to offer. So, whenever we can, we offer the same training to volunteers as we would be, as we offer to our staff and really making sure that volunteers are in the position that is the most impactful and meaningful for them. And so, you know, getting down to, what do you want to get out of this position, or what are your goals for this position? And then really aligning that with the position that we have available. And if it's a position that we don't have available then we would send them to some other organization in the community that does have it available

because we really, um, it's very important that that people are aligned with their, uh, their values and what they want to get out of the position. And we may not have that. So, um, combination of both I think is really the way to go. Um, and really just don't underestimate the, the little things like those birthday messages, um, is something that I find very meaningful.

Dianne: Well, you're all juggernauts. And Debbie, you have something to add from habitat.

Debbie: Yeah. Um, I think we do a lot of the same types of things that they do at the other organizations, recognizing that both formal and informal are important. I think it's always, um, a really good idea. A lot of volunteers when you ask them, well, we asked our volunteers why they came back during a pandemic? We asked our core volunteers to come back and we said, what enticed you to come out during a pandemic? And they said, because we want to see our families get into homes. So, for them, the cause was really important. And so, we capitalized on that and we approached our families and said, could you write something for them to let them know how important it is for you to have a home? And that really resonated with our volunteers. Um, so making sure that you're tying in the impact, the work that they're doing to the, to the, their volunteering piece is, um, really important part of recognition as well. And, and taking it even further, not just identifying the impact but making sure other people know about that impact. So, making sure that message gets out, make sure your board hears about your volunteers, make sure your volunteers hear about the great work they're doing. Uh, make sure the community hears about it.

Dianne: Just a few things for the volunteer manager to think about it. Oh, by the way, tell everyone everything. And don't forget about the birthdays. So congratulations. You guys are amazing. Anybody want to add something on that or Sherry? Do you want to go on to your next step? I know you had a third point of conversation.

Sherry: Well, the other parts were supervision and focusing on evaluation and then just providing the ongoing support feedback. And then of course, asking volunteers for feedback and through whether it's a satisfaction survey or an exit survey, just so that you can improve the volunteer experience with your organization. Um, we do the satisfaction surveys and I feel like the supervision is very, we focus very much on the informal, um feedback and evaluation piece. I'm wondering if, if anyone could comment on how they approach supervision specifically with providing feedback and support?

Dianne: On the fly.

Sherry: On the fly, which is yeah.

Ruth: So good question, Sherry. Um, so a lot of my volunteers are, uh, what I would say are group leads. So, they run a lot of groups. And so I did it as part of our program review. So, in analyzing the program and how they thought we did during, initiating it, and creating virtual programming and what could we have done better in the last year. I actually implemented the same sort of thing amongst that. So it wasn't so threatening. They kind of knew it ahead of

time. I sent them the questions. Um, and so as you know, I really want to have your feedback on how was the supervision? Okay. What better could I have done to support you during that time? So it was really a, um, really just a conversation. Um, and it worked out really well and I took some things away there and be able to implement them in the next year.

Dianne: It's, you have to be sneaky cause you don't want anybody to feel like you're pinning them down for is, it's tender, tender topic. Isn't it? Getting feedback. And it has to do with boundaries as well, which we didn't touch on quite through the HR piece. But I think that staff volunteer relationship, what I'm hearing is really amazing, uh, management, um, personalities, or features that we should all hope to have in, in a manager of any kind. Volunteer manager or a boss. So similarly to the HR module, we are managers of people and you are managers of people and it's, it's very similar management practices, I guess, in volunteer management with a little extra I might add. So thank you so much. We're going to take a break here and you know that what you've provided is, is a tip, tip of the iceberg of conversations that can be had on volunteer management and the volunteer management cycle. And this was just one segment. So, we'll see you at the next one.